

Facts About Marine Debris & How You Can Help

Compiled by the NOAA Marine Debris Program

Marine debris is a global problem. It can be found in oceans and on shores around the world.

Sources

- Land -- e.g., from roadways and streets to stormdrains, canals, streams, and rivers, out to the ocean.
- Ocean -- e.g., from a boat or platform into the ocean.

Movement

- Floating debris is moved by winds and ocean currents, sometimes far from its origin.

North Pacific Marine Debris "Hot Spot"

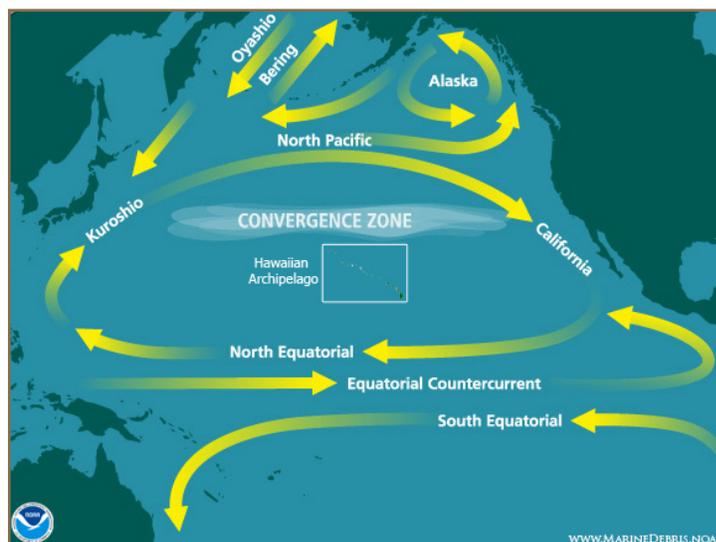
- Known area of accumulation for marine debris in the north Pacific Ocean.
- Also known as the North Pacific Subtropical Convergence Zone.

Impacts

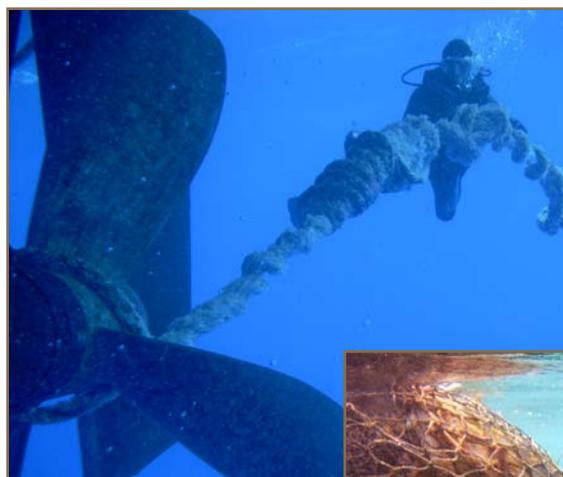
- Eyesore on beaches
- Habitat damage
- Wildlife entanglement
- Ingestion by wildlife
- Vessel damage and navigation
- Human health and safety
- Alien species transport

Marine debris & wildlife

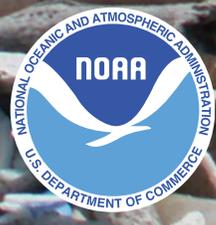
- Marine debris affects wildlife from great blue whales to tiny coral polyps.
- Exactly how many animals die each year due to marine debris impacts is not known.



Map of the Pacific Ocean showing large ocean currents (yellow arrows), the Hawaiian Archipelago, and the marine debris "Hot Spot" or subtropical convergence zone.



Marine debris can entangle everything from a vessel's propeller (above) to a threatened green sea turtle (left).



Facts About Marine Debris & How You Can Help (cont.)

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Plastic debris

- Distributed in oceans and on beaches worldwide; not surprising given its durability and floatability.

Plastic debris and pollutants

- Studies show plastics can transport organic contaminants in the oceans.
- The impact of contaminants on plastic to the marine food web is still largely unknown.
- NOAA, with the Univ. of WA-Tacoma, coordinated an international research workshop (Sept. '08) to help shed light on this issue.



Marine debris litters a beach east of South Point on the Big Island of Hawaii. Much of the debris found here is made of plastic.

Degradation of marine debris

- Most debris items take a long time to degrade in the marine environment.
- Degradation time depends on many factors such as plastic type, size, thickness, and environmental conditions.

How YOU Can Help:

No matter how close to or far from the ocean, you can contribute to the solution!

- Get involved! Participate in beach or stream cleanups in your area!
- Dispose of your trash properly!
- Remember that our land and sea are connected. Trash that enters streams or rivers eventually makes its way to the ocean.
- **Reduce** the amount of waste you produce.
- **Reuse** items whenever possible! Choose **reusable** items over disposable ones!
- **Recycle** as much as possible! Bottles, cans, bags, cell phones, and many other items can be **recycled**.
- **Recycle** your fishing line or throw it away in the proper place!



For more information visit NOAA's Marine Debris 101: marinedebris.noaa.gov/marinedebris101/

Also visit the Keep Oceans Clean campaign: www.keeпоceansclean.org/home/

